

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

10021
.A8451
C.3



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Office of
Governmental
and Public Affairs

Major News Releases and Speeches

May 22-May 29, 1981

CURRENT SERIAL RECORDS

FEB 09 '82

U.S.D.A.
LIBRARY
RECEIVED

Speeches

U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Governmental and Public Affairs

Remarks by Secretary John R. Block at the Seventh Ministerial Session of the World Food Council, Novi Sad, Yugoslavia, May 25, 1981.

I have looked forward to this meeting with distinguished agriculture ministers from all parts of the world. This is an important opportunity for discussion of worldwide food and agriculture issues, and I am glad that it is the occasion for my first travel as the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture outside my home country.

The World Food Council has as its purpose one of mankind's most cherished goals--the elimination of hunger throughout the world. The United States supports a number of the Council's initiatives, including its concept of designating food priority countries that need special attention in achieving greater self reliance. We endorse the special focus on food crisis in African countries and the need for special measures there. And we agree with the Council's initiative on developing national food strategies to place higher priority on the food/agriculture sectors of foodshort countries.

It has now been four months since a new administration assumed responsibility in Washington. Our food and agriculture policies reflect the objectives of President Reagan's economic program. These include controlling inflation and assuring economic growth within a framework of opportunity and incentive for our agriculture and the private marketing system.

U.S. Agricultural Policies

U.S. domestic policies encourage agricultural production to meet world food needs within the framework of a market economy. These policies include expanded market incentives for increased production of grains and oilseeds, continuation of the farmer-owned reserve, increased support for agricultural research, and renewed attention to the preservation of farmland and its productivity.

The domestic farm program is aimed at expanding production of the basic commodities; there is in effect no government program to

encourage the idling of land or its diversion from food crops. Production signals are to come from the marketplace; meanwhile, the farmer-owned reserve is in place to absorb plentiful supplies and assure the availability of grains for export.

We support increased funding for agricultural research in order to assure our long-term productivity to meet both domestic and export needs. Much of the additional research may also be useful to other countries in advancing their productive ability. Resource and conservation programs are also directed toward a long-term strengthening of our productive base.

U.S. Trade Policies

U.S. agricultural trade policies are directed at an expanded and liberalized exchange of commodities in the world market. These policies include efforts to reduce trade barriers in all countries, foreign access to U.S. agricultural products on an open and equal basis, and some expansion of U.S. export credit programs.

We believe that nations should cooperate in reducing trade barriers that work against the efficient production and distribution of farm products. We are concerned about increasing protectionism in parts of the world and urge that all countries exercise vigilance to avoid measures that would hamper trade growth in the future.

In the United States, we have given new emphasis to our policy of making U.S. products available to other countries on a dependable basis. We oppose the use of embargoes for any but the most extreme foreign policy reasons, as President Reagan made clear when he lifted the partial embargo of farm product exports to the Soviet Union. In principle we are also opposed to international agreements that would allocate world production or trade or substitute for the workings of the market.

U.S. Foreign Assistance Policies

U.S. assistance policies are aimed at increased world food security through continued food assistance and the encouragement of economic development in low-income countries. These policies include the continuation of the Public Law 480 program (Food for Peace), a reserves policy that assures our status as a reliable supplier, and

strengthened programs of technical assistance to low income food-deficit countries.

The United States is committed to food aid as an instrument for economic development. The overall food aid program includes Public Law 480, which is now before Congress for extension, and commitments to the Food Aid Convention of the International Wheat Agreement and the World Food Program. The Food Security Reserve of 4 million tons of wheat backs up these commitments.

The United States is also committed to strengthening the role of science and technology in the reduction of world hunger and malnutrition.

In short, our farm policies recognize that U.S. agriculture is an integral part of the world economy, that American farmers produce for the world, and that our country bears major responsibilities with respect to needy of the world.

The World Food Situation

Fortunately, there has been substantial improvement in the world food situation since this Council was conceived at the World Food Conference in 1974. This should be emphasized -that the world food situation is not desperate. It is by no means as dim as it has been portrayed with respect to many developing countries.

Gratifying progress has been made in many of these countries over the past decade to improve levels of agricultural production and food consumption and to assure supplies in years of production short-fall. Countries where food capabilities have improved include India, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Argentina, Brazil and Colombia--countries whose populations total almost one billion! Although more can be accomplished in these and other developing countries, we take some pride in having contributed to the gains that have been recorded. Much has also been achieved in alleviating the drought situation in several East African countries and the Sahel--in response to calls from this Council and from FAO. In these African regions, the effects of serious drought have been compounded by civil strife, open warfare, and refugee problems.

In recent years, grain shortfalls have actually been more evident in a few developed countries rather than in the developing countries. It is

still true, however, that many developing countries have failed to increase food production to meet growing populations and demand in their countries.

In the United States we are optimistic about crop production this year, although it is very early in the season. We do have a fairly good perspective on the winter wheat crop, which is forecast at a record high 57 million tons--10 percent above last year's crop. Our first projection is that total U.S. grain production this year will be up 16 percent, grain exports will be at record levels, and U.S. stocks will recover somewhat from last year's levels. Stocks of wheat in the United States are more than adequate. Corn stocks tend toward the tight side, but feed use in my country tends to adjust to supplies and thus soften the effects of a variation in stocks. The soybean carryover this year will be below a year earlier, but generally adequate, and considerably above the 1979 carryover.

World Food Security

The world's food security is significantly improved over the period of 1973-74. The overall level of grain reserves is good, and major developing countries such as India and Bangladesh are in a better situation with respect to food production and stocks. But we recognize that for millions of people the daily food supply remains precarious, and that there are no simple solutions for this.

The point should be made, however, that this is not the responsibility of a small group of donor countries alone or of the international organizations they fund. The responsibility lies first and foremost with individual governments which must take the steps needed to increase food self-reliance for their people. In general, appropriate actions include:

- 1) Increasing food production, especially in food deficit, low-income countries.
- 2) Government policies in low income, food deficit countries that provide private incentives and investments.
- 3) Improving the food infrastructure such as storage and warehouse facilities and the institutions that support food systems.

- 4) Expanding trade--to earn needed foreign exchange for imports, not only of food, but of petroleum and of development technology.
- 5) Establishing national reserves and, as appropriate, regional food security arrangements. The cost of carrying reserves cannot be borne by a few grain exporting countries. We recommend that other nations should begin now to establish their own reserve programs.

U.S. Views on World Food Security

The United States believes that it has set a positive example in the long search for world food security. Our agricultural policies emphasize production for export and an open market system providing full access to foreign buyers. We feel that our marketing system is responsive to world market changes.

Beyond this, we feel that the United States is unique in having developed reserve policies designed to meet domestic objectives and international needs--commercial and concessional commitments. The Food Security Reserve of 4 million tons of wheat backs our food aid commitments. The farmer-owned reserve contributes in a very important way to world market stability and supply assurance. Through both bilateral and multilateral programs, we provide food aid and encourage increased production in deficit countries.

We recognize, however, that the United States cannot assure world food security if it is to serve as the only holder of reserves. We believe, therefore, that other countries should establish their own national reserves policies. Other exporters should develop reserves policies to help assure world food supplies instead of relying on annual crops to support exports. Developing countries, to the extent possible, should also establish reserves and related infrastructure. Technical assistance is available from various sources including the United States, other donor countries, and international organizations.

The United States believes that individual country reserve systems which operate in response to price signals from the world wheat market, releasing reserves when the supply is short and holding reserves when the supplies are plentiful, are preferable to internationally coordinated programs presently under discussion. The United States will urge the International Wheat Council at its June

meeting to explore alternative approaches that take into account the merits of market-oriented systems. The United States recommends that other nations begin now to establish their own reserve programs, instead of waiting for a new wheat trade agreement or actions by other international organizations.

U.S. Development Assistance

Finally, I will say a few words about U.S. development assistance to food and agriculture sectors of developing countries--specifically four aspects of this effort:

- 1) We see agricultural development as providing the foundation for overall economic development in most developing countries--countries which are still largely rural. Agricultural development raises the levels of living for rural and for urban workers, and it provides the base for mutually advantageous trade with other countries.
- 2) In recent years the United States has directed our bilateral assistance more to the most needy countries--especially Africa.
- 3) The United States has been channeling an increasing proportion of its total aid resources through multilateral agencies and has made it possible for them to expand their programs very substantially. And we are encouraging these organizations, the international banks, the World Food Program, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the United Nations Development Program, to allocate more of their assistance to the most needy countries and to utilize a larger proportion of their resources in food and agriculture projects. These organizations have been responsive.
- 4) The U.S. Department of Agriculture is fully committed to assist in the process of agricultural development and is involved in many facets of the U.S. assistance program. USDA scientists and technicians are working with the Agency for International Development in providing technical assistance to low income developing countries and in training their agriculturalists. USDA is also involved in exchanges of scholars and scientists concerned with food and agricultural problems--particularly among transitional developing countries with more advanced economies.

It is important that we continue this process of thinking together and working together in the best interests of all. I appreciate the opportunity to meet with you in this beautiful country, and I look forward to working with you, individually and through the World Food Council and other organizations, toward a world of peace and plenty.

#

Remarks prepared for delivery by Secretary John R. Block before the American Club, Brussels, Belgium, May 27, 1981.

The 1980's: A Common Opportunity

It is an opportunity for me to speak before this club during my first visit to Europe as Secretary of Agriculture. I realize that each of you is linked to America, by birth or employment or simply friendship-and this has given you a unique perspective on the economic ties between Europe and the United States.

What I want to do now is to talk to you about changes taking place on both sides of the Atlantic. I want to talk about responsibility and also a new dimension of opportunity.

My colleagues and I have been in Yugoslavia the past two days for the seventh ministerial session of the World Food Council. While the world food situation has improved since 1974 when the Council was created, I need not have to tell you that we still have much to worry about.

Global inflation, monetary instability and energy problems have been excruciating to the developing countries. These problems also affect the European Community and the U.S., and they raise serious questions about our obligations to other countries.

The European Community and the United States account for only 11 percent of the world's population--yet we account for about half of all world trade including about half of all agricultural trade.

This puts a serious responsibility on our shoulders because what we do affects the stability of international trade, the world economy, hence the welfare of other billions of people. I prefer, however, to view this as a tremendous opportunity. It is an opportunity for the EC and the

U.S. to join in fostering a world of expanding trade, where products move freely, and food becomes more available to all, at stable and relatively low prices.

If you're thinking that this is an easy point for me to make--well, you're right. The United States has a highly efficient agriculture that benefits from trade and needs to trade.

This didn't just happen. American farmers became the largest exporters of commodities because they have had the freedom to produce and market, and they had the ability to get out and seek those new markets.

We have now reached a point where our farmers are capitalized to produce for the export market. They expect it. And when they are frustrated by a lost market due to government action or failure--they make their elected leaders share the frustration.

The increasing importance of foreign markets cannot be overlooked. Ten years ago exports provided only 15 percent of U.S. farmers market returns. This year the figure is 25 percent. And for crop farmers, exports account for almost a half of cash returns. We export about 60 percent of U S. wheat, rice and soybeans. About half of our cotton and a third of our feed grains and tobacco are exported.

Looking at it from the other side, our farmers provide 45 percent of the world's exports of wheat and 70 percent of the world's exports of feed grains. We also supply from 60 to 70 percent of all soybeans in world commerce.

Dependability is the word on both sides. Our world customers benefit from U.S. supply availability on a dependable basis. U.S. farmers benefit from dependable markets where they have the opportunity to compete fully.

Our government is opposed to export embargoes for any but the most extreme foreign policy reasons. It is opposed in principle to any system of bilateral agreements that might have the effect of fragmenting the world market. It opposes multilateral commodity arrangements tending to allocate supplies and divide up the world market.

What I'm saying is that the U.S. views American agriculture as a part of a world system. Our farmers expect to compete on a fair and realistic basis and to benefit wherever they have comparative advantage.

This is why the United States continues to work toward a more liberal trade system in which trade distortions would be at a minimum. And this is the philosophy underlying our discussions with European Community officials.

And I'm certain you know that the United States supported the establishment of the European Community, just as we support enlargement of the Community now. We recognize the right of any country to maintain the internal system it desires.

At the same time, however, we are becoming concerned about developments that might lead to greater instability in world trade and greater restrictionism in the European market. We are concerned about the community's future relations with the United States both as a market and as a competitor.

Some of our specific concerns are these:

- * The Community is considering an export policy through which surpluses accumulated under the Common Agricultural Policy would be disposed of with export subsidies under long-term bilateral agreements. Large quantities of wheat are already being exported under subsidy to foreign customers, including such key U.S. markets as Latin America and China. This has the effect of transferring the cost of domestic programs to the world marketplace.

- * The Community is considering a proposal to tax vegetable fats and oils. Since such a tax would affect the consumption of U.S. soybean oil whether imported directly or produced from imported U.S. soybeans, it would be a violation of the zero duty concessions obtained during the Dillon Round of negotiations.

- * The Community is considering action to unbind the zero duties on imports of some non-grain feed ingredients that are imported from the U.S. These are products such as corn gluten feed and dried distillers grains, which have been moving into EC countries because of the Community's artificially high internal prices.

- * Until yesterday, a duty-free beef quota granted earlier to the United States had seemed to be under some question. However, at our meeting yesterday Agriculture Commissioner Dalsager reassured me that the EC will honor its commitment so that the U.S. will receive the entire 10,000 metric-ton quota negotiated as part of the multilateral trade negotiations completed in 1979.

We recognize that no major nation has a totally free trade system. All have some restrictions. But where the U.S. has been unable to keep its borders totally open, such as for cheese and beef, we have still maintained the largest import market.

We believe in two principles:

First, trading rules and commitments negotiated over the years provide a basis for fairness and true competition in administering trade policies. We must defend our rights when these are violated.

Secondly, these agreements should move toward greater freedom to trade and greater opportunity for efficient producers to serve the world needs.

President Reagan is moving the U.S. toward internal policies favoring individual incentive and enterprise--with a minimum of federal regulation. These policies are consistent with external policies favoring trade expansion on an open and competitive basis.

We approach our customers and competitors with an invitation to negotiate for lower trade barriers wherever they exist. An open trading world is the future--and it can and will be achieved.

The world's food economy is a global enterprise. Even in times like these, when there is backsliding toward protectionism, we know that in the end we will have to deal rationally with the world's food and trade problems.

I subscribe to the philosophy that problems are only opportunities in work clothes. Our opportunity is cooperation rather than confrontation. Through cooperation we can work with the Europeans and other nations in creating an export climate where both consumers and producers can benefit from efficient agricultures. That--for the 1980's is our common opportunity.

#

News Releases

U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Governmental and Public Affairs

AMERICAN EGG BOARD SUSPENDS ASSESSMENTS FOR TWO MONTHS

WASHINGTON, May 22--The American Egg Board, with approval from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, today suspended assessments on egg production for the months of June and July.

Thomas H. Porter, an official with USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said the board's action is intended to provide relief to egg producers suffering income losses due to current marketing conditions.

Porter said the American Egg Board uses assessment revenues to conduct national advertising, promotion, research and consumer education on eggs. He said the scheduled advertising program will be continued through 1981. Suspension of assessments, estimated to amount to a loss of about a million dollars in revenues, will require a cut back or elimination of less essential activities this year and in 1982.

The American Egg Board operates a program authorized by The Egg Research and Consumer Information Act. The act provides for an assessment of up to 5 cents per 30-dozen case of eggs to be paid for by egg producers. The 5 cent rate was approved in a producer referendum in 1975 and has been in effect since August 1976. The board has the authority to set the assessment rate at any level from zero to five cents per case, subject to USDA's approval.

Although assessments will not be collected for June and July, recordkeeping and other administrative requirements will be carried out during the suspension period.

#

USDA PROPOSES WAYS TO PRORATE FOOD STAMP BENEFITS IN THE FIRST MONTH

WASHINGTON, May 26--The U.S. Department of Agriculture has proposed rules to change the way food stamp benefits are calculated in the first month people apply for the stamps, said Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Mary C. Jarratt.

Currently, applicants who qualify for benefits receive a full month's allotment whether they apply on the second or the twenty-eighth day of the month, she said.

"Sometimes this results in households receiving retroactive benefits--providing food stamps for food they've already bought," she said.

USDA is proposing two options to reduce program costs:

--Under one, people who apply for food stamps after the 15th day of the month would receive only a half month's allotment. This proposal would save \$210 million annually in food stamp costs.

--Under the second, food stamp benefits paid in the first month of eligibility would be prorated daily. This option would save \$420 million per year.

"The changes are designed to reduce program costs and better target program benefits on an applicant's actual needs," she said. "The proposals are in line with USDA's efforts to reduce program spending and make the program more accountable. About 23 million people--receiving \$955.4 million--currently participate in the program each month."

Comments on the options should be sent to Alberta Frost, deputy administrator for family nutrition programs, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, Washington, D.C., 20250, by July 6.

The proposals were published in the May 22 Federal Register.

#

P.L. 480 AID TO KOREA ENDS AFTER 26 YEARS

WASHINGTON, May 26--The Republic of Korea, which has received more than \$2 billion in Public Law 480 Title I and Title II agricultural assistance over the past 26 years, has ended its last assistance agreement with the United States and subsequently will buy only on commercial terms.

Alan T. Tracy, general sales manager for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service, says Korea is a prime example of the market development benefits to the United States and the recipient country as a result of the P.L. 480 program.

"A title I recipient since 1955, Korea has developed internally and has grown into the seventh largest market in the world for U.S. agricultural products," Tracy says. "U.S. agricultural exports to Korea have grown from \$42.8 million at the outset of the program in 1955 to \$1.6 billion in fiscal 1980."

Korea was the United States' largest export market for rice in fiscal 1980 with purchases of nearly \$220 million. Its cotton purchases of \$474 million and hides and skins purchases of \$93 million put it in third and fourth place, respectively, for these commodities.

Other major U.S. agricultural exports to Korea in fiscal 1980 were: wheat and wheat products, \$287 million; feed grains, \$271 million; soybeans and soybean products, \$121 million; tallow, \$55 million; and tobacco, \$45 million.

During 1955-81, the United States provided Korea with \$1.66 billion in concessional credits under the P.L. 480 Title I program and \$405 million worth of food grants under Title II.

The final P.L. 480 loan for the purchase of \$27 million worth of U.S. wheat was signed in Seoul on May 18 by Korea's Deputy Prime Minister Byong Hyun Shin. Minister Shin said the signing of the loan agreement marked both the beginning as well as the end of an era. While the P.L. 480 program in Korea was being phased out, Shin saw the occasion as "the beginning of a new approach to cooperation in the agricultural sector" between the United States and Korea.

#

NOTED HORTICULTURIST TO HEAD U.S. NATIONAL ARBORETUM

WASHINGTON, May 27--Henry Marc Cathey, an authority on plant growth regulation and ornamental plants, today was named director of the U.S. National Arboretum by Anson R. Bertrand, director of science and education for the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Cathey has been chief of the Florist and Nursery Crops Laboratory in the Science and Education Administration's Horticultural Science Institute at Beltsville, Md., since 1972. During the past year, he has been the first appointee to the D.C. Kiplinger Chair in Floriculture at

Ohio State University, where he prepared an assessment of the future priorities and problems of ornamental and flowering plant research. He was president of the American Horticultural Society from 1974 until 1978.

The National Arboretum is a major USDA research institution with 444 acres for plant breeding and cultivation on the edge of Washington, D.C. It is famous for its collection of camellias, azaleas, dwarf conifers and other ornamental plants. It houses the National Bonsai Collection and the National Herb Garden, the latter a joint venture of the Arboretum and the Herb Society of America.

A native of Davidson, N.C., Cathey received his B.S. degree from North Carolina State University and M.S. and Ph.D. degrees from Cornell University. He also studied for a year as a Fulbright Scholar at the Agricultural University in Wageningen, the Netherlands, before joining USDA as a research horticulturist in 1956.

At the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, Cathey studied the interrelations of light, temperature and chemicals in the growth of plants. From this research, he developed guidelines for applying light and chemicals to control the size, shape, color, pollution tolerance and flowering of a large number of florist and nursery grown plants.

Cathey has written 22 USDA publications and has made frequent contributions to the "American Horticulturist," official publication of the American Horticultural Society. He was elected a fellow of the American Society for Horticultural Science in 1972.

#

FmHA ANNOUNCES INCREASES IN INTEREST RATES

WASHINGTON, May 27--Interest rates for some farm and housing loans made by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farmers Home Administration will be increased to between 13 and 15 percent, effective with loans approved after May 29.

Acting FmHA administrator Dwight Calhoun, in announcing the higher rates, said they were necessary "because interest rates are increasing and it's our intent to keep our rates as close as possible with the cost of money to the U.S. Treasury, rates charged in the general

money market and those charged by private rural lending institutions."

The programs affected and the new loan rates are:

--farm operating loans will increase from 14 to 14 1/2 percent.

--emergency natural disaster loans for production will increase from 14 1/2 to 15 percent, and emergency loans for those who can obtain credit elsewhere will rise 1 percentage point, from 14 to 15.

--production type loans for economic emergencies will increase from 14 to 14 3/4 percent.

FmHA's rural housing loan rates will also increase, with single family housing loans rising 1/4 of a percentage point to 13 1/4 and multiple family housing loans increasing from 11 1/2 to 13 1/4.

Rates for limited resource (very low income) farm loans for production and real estate credit will remain unchanged at 7 and 5 percent, respectively.

#

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY TO HONOR U.S. BEEF QUOTA

BRUSSELS, May 27--Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block said today he had received assurances that the European Community would fully honor its commitment to allow 10,000 metric tons of high quality U.S. beef to enter the Community levy-free.

The quota, negotiated in the multilateral trade negotiations completed in 1979, came into question as a result of Canadian government claims that the EC discriminates against it. A panel of the General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) ruled in favor of Canada, enjoining the EC to permit the Canadians to have equal access to the EC market.

At meetings with Community officials here yesterday, Block won assurances that the GATT action would not jeopardize the U.S. quota.

"Agriculture Commissioner Poul Dalsager reassured me the EC will honor its commitment so the United States will receive the entire 10,000 ton quota," Block said.

So far, the level of EC imports under the quota has been below expectations, Block said, and EC licenses for imports of U.S. beef to

the Community for the first half of this year are only about 1,000 tons.

Block said this is due to the uncertainties regarding EC sanitary regulations, especially with respect to hormones; to slowness by the EC in issuing import licenses at the beginning of this year, and the fact that U.S. high quality beef is not well known in the EC market.

U.S. market development programs are underway to increase consumer demand for U.S. beef within the European Community, he said.

Block leaves for London today. He also will meet with agriculture officials in France, Germany, and the Netherlands before returning to Washington June 4.

#

USDA WITHDRAWS APPROVAL OF GARBAGE DISPOSAL OPERATIONS AT 2 AIRPORTS; WARNS THIRD

WASHINGTON, May 27--U.S. Department of Agriculture officials have suspended approval of foreign-origin garbage disposal operations handled by Dobbs House Airline Catering at New Orleans International Airport and by Sky Chefs division of Flagship International, Inc., at Honolulu International Airport.

USDA has also notified Sky Chefs managers at Los Angeles International Airport of its intent to withdraw approval of their garbage handling and disposal operation.

"Suspension of USDA approval means the operation as presently handled must stop," said Harvey L. Ford, deputy administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

"The violations at Honolulu and New Orleans are serious enough to pose an imminent risk of introducing foreign agricultural pests and diseases. For this reason, we have had to shut them down immediately," Ford said.

"These actions are being taken because of repeated violations of federal regulations requiring the safe disposal of food and food wastes entering the United States on international flights."

Agricultural inspectors at the two airports have reported violations within the last two weeks, he said.

Dobbs House and Sky Chefs are entitled to hearings to respond to the allegations contained in the formal complaints and to show cause why USDA should not withdraw approval, Ford said. Such approval, contained in a compliance agreement between USDA and the operator, is necessary to handle and dispose of foreign-origin food and food wastes.

Safe disposal under federal regulations must include sterilization, incineration or grinding garbage into an approved sewage system for disposal. Most of the violations involved removal of garbage to landfills, without sterilization or incineration, Ford said.

"Garbage can be, and in some countries has been, the source of disastrous disease outbreaks and pest introductions," Ford said. "In the Dominican Republic and Haiti, swine production has been devastated by an outbreak of African swine fever, which we are almost certain was introduced by garbage from ships or planes.

"In addition to African swine fever, we are constantly concerned about many other pests and diseases that can easily be carried in food, foreign souvenirs, cargoes and other materials," Ford said.

USDA officials administer agricultural import regulations to prevent the entry of products containing such pests or diseases. USDA inspectors are stationed at about 80 ports of entry.

#

HOW TO AVOID SUMMER FOOD POISONING

WASHINGTON, May 28--When your stomach does flip-flops and life in the bathroom isn't amusing, maybe your "virus" is food poisoning.

"Most of us think of food poisoning as a mishap that sweeps through a gathering, sometimes hospitalizing the victims," said Sara Beck, consumer meat specialist of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Quality Service. "However, food poisoning is not confined to public places--it can happen in your kitchen.

"Each year more than 2 million cases of bacterial food poisoning occur in the United States despite our advanced food processing technology," Beck said.

Food poisoning should not be taken lightly. According to USDA microbiologists, most cases of food poisoning are caused by bacteria that are everywhere--in the air we breathe and on us and on everything we touch.

The organisms that most often cause bacterial food poisoning are Salmonella, Staphylococcus and Clostridium perfringens.

"Because bacteria are everywhere, food contamination is universal," said Beck. "Prevention becomes a matter of stopping the growth of these bacteria or killing them at the proper time to prevent their growth and possible poisoning of food."

This means people must process, cook or prepare food using methods that will prevent food poisoning.

USDA has 3 basic rules that help prevent food poisoning:

- Keep hot food hot.
- Keep cold food cold.
- Keep food clean.

"Simple as they may sound, these rules will control, stop or destroy the bacteria responsible for food borne illness," she said.

"Keeping food hot means cooking food thoroughly, holding it at a hot temperature during serving and fully reheating stored foods," Beck said. "Keeping food cold means refrigerating perishables or leftovers promptly. Keeping food clean means avoiding unsanitary practices that contaminate food."

USDA helps consumers by assuring that meat, poultry and egg products are safe to eat when they leave the processing plant.

"However, it's the consumer's responsibility to keep food safe after purchase," she said.

"Many people suffer from lack of knowledge about food safety. Too often, people let food go bad through temperature abuse or contamination and never realize what they've done."

It's impossible to detect food poisoning bacteria or their poisons except through laboratory analysis. These bacteria don't change the taste, smell or looks of the food.

"Only when food spoils can we tell something is wrong," Beck said. "Frozen food should be kept wrapped and thawed either in the refrigerator or under cold water. Wash everything--including hands--that comes in contact with uncooked or raw food with soap and hot water," she said.

• USDA recommends that people keep their refrigerators at 35 to 40 degrees Fahrenheit (2 to 4 degrees Celsius) with a freezer temperature of zero or below F. (-18 degrees C.). "Germs on food don't multiply very fast at those temperatures," Beck said.

"Freeze meat and poultry leftovers in covered containers," she said. "Keep in mind that warm food will raise the temperature of the refrigerator somewhat.

"When preparing meat and poultry salads, chill all the ingredients thoroughly. After mixing the salad, put it in shallow containers to remove the heat produced in preparation and to allow more rapid chilling. Then refrigerate.

"You can keep unopened vacuum-sealed packages of lunch meats in the refrigerator for two weeks," she said. "Once you open them, wrap them well and use them within three to five days. Store frankfurters in their original packages and use them no later than one week after the 'sell by' date printed on their package.

"Don't buy or use food from leaking, bulging or dented cans or containers," Beck said. "Don't taste or use food that has a foul odor or any food that spurts liquid when the container is opened."

It's nearly impossible to list all the potentially dangerous situations, Beck said. "However, with common sense you can easily practice proper food safety," she said.

You can learn more about food safety from USDA. Write: USDA/FSQS Information, room 3606-S, Washington, D.C., 20250. Many publications are also available in Spanish.

#

USDA OFFICIALS REPORT SIX SCRAPIE OUTBREAKS THIS YEAR--FOUR IN ONE MONTH

WASHINGTON, May 28--U.S. Department of Agriculture officials said today they don't know whether four outbreaks of sheep scrapie confirmed in a one-month period constitute an increase in the disease or just better reporting.

John K. Atwell, deputy administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, said there have been six outbreaks of scrapie, a slow-acting but fatal disease of sheep, since Sept. 30. Four were confirmed between April 13 and May 1. There were 11 outbreaks reported during the preceding fiscal year.

"With four outbreaks confirmed within a one-month period, we know that there is a greater awareness of the disease and its symptoms; However, it is too early to tell whether this reflects an overall increase in the incidence," he said.

Atwell said two outbreaks were confirmed April 13--one in a flock of 41 sheep in Rockingham county, N.H., and the other in a 19-head flock in Sussex county, N.J. Scrapie was also diagnosed April 17 in two sheep in Ulster county, N.Y. The most recent case was confirmed May 1 in a flock of 77 sheep in Harford county, Md.

Earlier in the year, a 36-head flock in Columbia county, Wis., was found infected Jan. 9, and a flock of 12 in New London county, Conn., was diagnosed Feb. 27.

Atwell said good reporting, record keeping and surveillance are important to the scrapie eradication program. The disease's unusually long incubation period--from 18 months to 4 years--means that sheep can be dispersed to many other flocks by the time the infection is discovered. The sooner the disease is found, the less chance there is for spread, and the easier the job of tracing movements.

Scrapie is a slow-acting viral disease of sheep and goats that attacks the central nervous system. No cure exists and it is fatal in virtually all known cases, Atwell said.

"The disease can be eradicated only by destroying all infected or exposed animals, tracing movements into and out of affected flocks and maintaining surveillance for up to 42 months over any flocks that have had contact with sheep from the infected flocks," Atwell said.

"Sheep producers usually first notice scrapie when the infected animal begins to rub incessantly against objects, apparently to relieve intense itching," Atwell said. "This action rubs the wool off the shoulders, flanks and rump, leaving raw and bare skin. Other signs of the disease are loss of weight and poor coordination."

#

BLOCK SAYS GRAIN DISCUSSIONS SET WITH SOVIET UNION

LONDON, May 28--Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block said today the United States will enter into grain consultations with the Soviet Union June 8-9 in London.

Block made the announcement at a press conference in London--one of six cities he is visiting in the European Community before returning to Washington June 4.

The following is a text of Block's statement:

"The United States will be entering into consultations on our current grain agreement with the Soviet Union. Those consultations will take place in London on the 8th and 9th of June.

"The agenda items for those consultations will be a review of the world crop situation, crops in the United States and crops in the Soviet Union. Secondly, we will discuss additional sales of grain to the Soviet Union, or additional needs that they may have under the current agreement, which expires at the end of September. The third agenda item--other business.

"I may point out that these agenda items are the same agenda items that have been discussed in the past when the Soviet Union and the United States have held consultations under the 5-year grain agreement that is still in existence and will be in existence until the end of September."

In Washington, the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced that Under Secretary of Agriculture Seeley Lodwick would head the U.S. delegation and Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade Boris Gordeev will lead the Soviet group.

The consultations in London will be the first since the United States imposed a partial embargo on agricultural exports to the Soviet Union in January 1980.

The embargo, which was lifted April 24 by President Reagan, halted shipments of wheat and corn to the Soviet Union in excess of 8 million tons in a single year, the maximum permitted under the agreement without prior consultation.

The Soviets have purchased and shipped the 8 million tons authorized for the current agreement year. The agreement, which took effect in October 1976, expires Sept. 30.

#

WHEAT INDUSTRY COUNCIL BUDGET FOR 1982 IS \$1 MILLION

WASHINGTON, May 28--The Wheat Industry Council budget for a nationally coordinated wheat and wheat foods research and nutrition education program will be \$1 million in fiscal year 1982, a U.S. Department of Agriculture official said today.

Thomas H. Porter, an official of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, which monitors the program, said the Wheat Industry Council prepared the budget and administers the program.

The budget for July 1, 1981, through June 30, 1982, includes \$60,000 for nutrition research, \$50,000 for market research, \$275,000 for council and USDA administrative expenses, and \$470,000 for information materials for dissemination to educators, consumers and the media. Most of the remaining budget will be used to repay a loan used to start the program, Porter said.

The program was authorized under the Wheat and Wheat Food Research and Nutrition Education Act and is conducted according to an order approved in March 1980 by wheat end product manufacturers. The council has recently opened offices at 6000 Executive Blvd., Suite 203, Rockville, Md., 20852.

Assessments of 1 cent per hundredweight (45 kilograms) of wheat bought by end product manufacturers will begin to accrue June 1. Manufacturers can receive refunds of assessments paid during the

coming year. They must, however, reserve the right to request them from the council by registered or certified mail within 60 days of publication of the council's budget in the Federal Register, which is scheduled for June 1.

#

IDAHO GIVES USDA RESPONSIBILITY FOR MEAT INSPECTION

WASHINGTON, May 29--Idaho will turn its meat inspection program over to the federal government July 1, a U.S. Department of Agriculture official said today.

According to Donald L. Houston, administrator for USDA's Food Safety and Quality Service, the governor of Idaho has notified USDA that the state cannot continue funding its meat inspection program after June 30.

"Under federal law, a state must give up its inspection program if it is unable to enforce requirements at least equal to those of a federal program," Houston said.

By June 30 about 80 meat plants now under state inspection must apply for federal inspection, he said.

Houston said about 90 additional plants that have been operating under various exemptions from state inspection--such as for custom-slaughter or low-volume operations--will be reviewed to determine if they need to come under federal inspection.

"USDA is working closely with Idaho officials to ensure a smooth transition to federal inspection," he said.

Idaho will be the 21st state to give up its meat inspection program. USDA assumed responsibility for Idaho's poultry inspection program in January 1971.

Notice of this action will be published in the May 29 Federal Register.

#

